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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to identify some of the eating habits and factors influencing food choices of selected junior (9 to 13 years old) and senior (14 to 19 years old) 4-H club members enrolled in Williamson County, Tennessee, in 1968. Data were collected through group interviews with 200 juniors and 70 seniors--116 boys and 154 girls. Identification of eating habits was sought related to breakfasts, snacking at school and at home, and drinking milk. The study also attempted to determine whether sex, age, place of residence, employment status of mother, and enrollment in the food-nutrition project affected food choices and eating habits of the interviewees. Results indicated that: (1) boys tended to have better eating habits than did girls; (2) senior members had slightly better eating habits than did junior members; (3) farm residents had somewhat better eating habits than did rural non-farm and urban members; (4) no appreciable difference existed between the eating habits of interviewees whose mothers were employed outside the home and those whose mothers were full-time homemakers; and (5) members enrolled in the Extension 4-H food-nutrition project did not have noticeably different eating habits than those not enrolled, but members who had been enrolled for a longer period of time had slightly better eating habits than did those who had been enrolled for a shorter period of time. (Author/KM)

RESEARCH SUMMAI .TURAL EXTENSION

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A Research Summary of a Graduate Study

FACTORS INFLUENCING FOOD CHOICES OF 4-H CLUB MEMBERS IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

by

Virginia Ruth Geary, Claire E. Gilbert and
Robert S. Dotson

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION EDUCATION

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FACTORS INFLUENCING GOOD CHOICES OF 4-H CLUB MEMBERS IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

by

Virginia Ruth Geary, Claire E. Gilbert, and Robert S. Dotson

December 1968*

ABSTRACT

This benchmark study was undertaken to identify some of the eating habits and factors influencing food choices of selected junior (9 to 13 years old) and senior (14 to 19 years old) 4-H Club boys and girls enrolled in Williamson County, Tennessee, in 1968. Based upon the findings of this study, and following the guidance of subject matter literature now being prepared for use by 4-H Club members, study programs and activities in the county food-nutrition project are to be intensified and expanded.

The data were collected by means of group interviews conducted in 10 percent of the junior and all of the senior clubs meeting in April, 1968. An interview schedule based on relevant research was used in collecting the data.

Identification of eating habits was sought related to breakfasts, snacking at school and at home, and drinking milk. In addition, the study attempted to determine whether sex, age, place of residence, employment status of mother, and enrollment in the food-nutrition project affected food choices and eating habits of the interviewees. Information was collected from 270 4-H Club members. Of this number, 116 were boys, 154 were girls; 200 were juniors and 70 were seniors.

*Date of completion of an M.S. degree thesis by Virginia Ruth Geary which served as a basis for this research summary.

Results of the findings indicated that the boys included in the study tended to have better eating habits than did the girls. The senior members had slightly better eating habits than did junior members.

Interviewees who lived on farms had somewhat better eating habits than did rural non-farm and urban members.

There was no appreciable difference in the eating habits of interviewees whose mothers were employed outside the home and those whose mothers were full-time homemakers.

Members who were enrolled in the Extension 4-H food-nutrition project did not have noticeably different eating habits than those who were not enrolled. However, members who had been enrolled for a longer period of time had slightly better eating habits than did those who had been enrolled for a shorter period of time.

Further study and investigation is desirable to determine the effects of an intensified educational program in the area of food and nutrition. Since no attempt was made in this study to analyze the nutritional content of the diets of members, a study including such analysis would provide more accurate information regarding adequacy of diets.

RESEARCH SUMMARY*

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the eating habits and factors influencing food choices of selected junior (9-13 years old) and senior (14-19 years old) 4-H Club boys and girls enrolled in Williamson County, Tennessee, in 1968.

II. METHODS EMPLOYED

An interview schedule based on relevant research was constructed to collect data for this study. The interview schedule was administered to 270 4-H Club members in group interviews. This number included 70 senior and 200 junior members. There were 116 boys and 154 girls involved in the group interviews.

Answers to the following specific questions were sought:

1. Did the breakfasts members ate conform to the pattern of the basic four food groupings?

2. Did snacks which members ate conform to the pattern of the basic four food groupings?

3. Did members drink recommended amounts of milk daily?

4. Did 4-H boys tend to have better eating habits than 4-H girls?

5. Did 4-H Club members enrolled in the food-nutrition project have better eating habits than those not enrolled?

6. Did those members whose mothers worked outside the home have poorer eating habits than those whose mothers were full-time homemakers?

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7. Were the eating habits of farm, rural non-farm, and urban members different? The food intake of the respondents was not analyzed as to the nutritional content. Many of the responses to interview questions were based on recall of the previous day's eating habits.

A review of related literature indicated that many studies had been conducted on the eating behavior of children and teen-agers. The need for research was established when the extent of poor dietary habits of young people in the United States was revealed.

There was agreement among researchers on the importance of good food habits developed early in life, during childhood and adolescence.

It was concluded from several studies that intentionally developed programs of nutrition education resulted in better diets of young people.

III. MAJOR FINDINGS

Regarding Characteristics of the 4-H Club Members

Listed below are some of the principal findings of this study regarding characteristics of selected Williamson County 4-H Club members.

1. Of the 270 4-H Club members interviewed, 98 lived on farms, 132 were rural non-farm, and 40 were urban members.

2. One hundred eleven (41 percent) of those interviewed were enrolled in the 4-H food-nutrition project. No senior boys were enrolled.

3. Forty-four percent of the girls and 46 percent of the boys had mothers who were employed outside the home.

Regarding Eating Habits of the 4-H Club Members

Findings related to the selected eating habits of Williamson County 4-H Club members interviewed are listed below:

1. When boys were compared with girls regarding breakfast eating, a higher percentage of the former (95) than of the latter (84) reportedly had eaten breakfast.

2. A higher percentage of senior members (96) than of juniors (86) reported eating breakfast.

3. More members living on farms (93 percent) than urban (80 percent) or rural non-farm (88 percent) reported eating breakfast.

4. Lack of time was the reason selected by most of the interviewees (16 of 31) for skipping breakfast.

5. More girls (142) than boys (75) reported preparing their own breakfasts at least some of the time.

6. The reason selected most often by interviewees (77) for preparing their own breakfast was because they liked to cook.

7. Sixty-six percent of the members who prepared their own breakfasts said they ate about the same amount as usual, 22 percent ate more, and 12 percent reported eating less on the day data were collected.

8. The fact that 96 percent of the senior girls enrolled in the food-nutrition project ate breakfast compared with 78 percent of the junior girls who were enrolled, indicated that, perhaps, longer exposure to the project may result in better eating habits.

9. There did not seem to be any marked difference in the eating habits of the respondents whose mothers were employed outside the home and those whose mothers were full-time homemakers.

10. When breakfasts and snacks consumed by interviewees were studied as to the inclusion of the four basic food groups, results showed that less than one-third of the members had included any of the fruit and vegetable

group in snacks both at home and at school. The bread and cereal group was the one included most in breakfasts (90 percent), snacks consumed at home (63 percent), and snacks consumed at school (46 percent).

11. More snacks were consumed at home (86 percent) by all members interviewed than at school (39 percent). Perhaps a reason for the low percentage of school snacks was the fact that most of the schools included in the survey allowed no "breaks" in their schedules, therefore permitting little time for snacks.

12. Eighty-three percent of all interviewees reported drinking milk every day. However, when amounts of milk consumed by interviewees were studied, 24 percent drank less than one glass. The recommended amount of four or more glasses daily was reported consumed by only 19 percent of the interviewees. The greatest percent (57) reported drinking one to three glasses daily.

13. In response to the question of why they did not drink milk, 39 of the 47 interviewees said they did not like milk. Three members reported milk was not available to them, one indicated being allergic to milk, and four did not respond to the question.

14. Of the 223 interviewees who reported drinking milk daily, 111 said they did so because they liked milk. Seventy-six indicated they drank milk because they felt it was good for them. Only 24 said they drank milk because mother or some adult made them, and 13 indicated some "other reason" for drinking milk.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

Some of the implications of the findings included the following:

1. Based on information revealed in this study, the educational programs for 4-H Club members in Williamson County, related to food-nutrition activities, need to be strengthened. These would follow the guidelines of the predetermined subject matter literature in this area.

2. Since boys included in the study tended to have better dietary habits than did the girls, careful consideration should be given to stronger food-nutrition programs and activities which would involve the girls in better nutrition practices.

3. Consideration also should be given to continued emphasis on better breakfast eating habits, more nutritious snacks as a part of the diet, and the importance and place of milk in the diet.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Further study and investigation is desirable to determine the effects of intensified food-nutrition programs conducted by Extension workers.

2. A nutritional analysis study would be a valuable means of determining the adequacy of the diets of 4-H Club members in any area.

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